

Provo Noting 136th Birthday

By N. La Verl Christensen

How did April 3 come to be designated as Provo's birthday? That's a logical question as the city commemorates its 136th anniversary.

In a nutshell, the first colony of Mormon settlers sent to Utah Valley by Brigham Young reached Provo River April 1, 1829. After a day of exploring, they started to build Fort Utah (original name of the settlement) on the 3rd — and that's the date we observe as the city's birthday.

There's more to the story, of course.

For many years March 12 had been celebrated as the date the pioneer colonizers arrived. Reviewing historical accounts early in 1968, this writer realized that date had to be incorrect.

Church records showed that two of the LDS Council meetings to plan the Utah Valley colonization were held in Great Salt Lake City AFTER March 12.

A meeting March 13 at Brigham Young's office resulted in the appointment of John S. Higbee as bishop of the Fort Utah Branch and leader of the colony. And on March 17 the names of 33 men "who were going to settle in Utah Valley" were read.

Before they could embark on the mission, the colonizers still had to outfit their wagons and

assemble livestock, farm implements, seeds and provisions. Obviously they could not have traveled to Utah Valley until about the first of the month.

Indeed, George Washington Bean, of the original party, wrote in his journal that the settlers arrived at Provo River on his 18th birthday, which happened to be April 1.

Since I was Herald editor at the time, I published these findings in a Page 1 article Jan. 21, 1968, along with varying statements by a number of historians.

On Feb. 4, I wrote Mayor Verl G. Dixon and Commissioners Leo Allen and Ray Murdock suggesting a study by an officially-appointed committee of historians to clarify the founding date.

The commissioners agreed such an important date in local history needed to be "firmed up." They appointed Dr. Gustive O. Larson, chairman, Dr. and Mrs. LeRoy Hafen and Theron H. Luke as a panel to make the study.

The committee's report, submitted to the commission early in March 1969, outlined considerable data pertaining to the settlement of Provo, and affirmed the April 1 and April 3 dates.

Accordingly, the city commission adopted an ordinance March 19 designating April 3 — the date work started on a permanent settlement — as "Provo City's Official Birthday."

The original Fort Utah was built south of Provo River somewhere in the vicinity of the present Geneva road. A monument erected by the Daughters of Pioneers in 1937 marks the general location, but isn't intended to designate the exact site.

Because of cold and wetness at the original location, a new fort was built in the spring of 1850 on higher ground at the site of the present North (Sowiette) Park at Fifth North and Fifth West.

By 1851 and 1852, settlers were building on lots outside the forts. There still were Indian troubles,

of course, and in 1854 during the "Walker War" (named for a hostile Ute chief) Provo's pioneers proceeded to build a 12-foot mud-and-rock wall around a segment of the city.

The project, never finished, was suspended when the Indian threat eased and the scene be-

came more peaceful.

In 1968, the Utah Lake Lions Club in cooperation with Brigham Young University archaeologists and Provo City sought to prove out the exact location of the original Fort Utah, but were unable to find remnants considered to be conclusive evidence.



An artist for Capt. Howard Stansbury, head of the government survey-exploration party, drew this sketch of the original Fort Utah.

More Than 500 Have Served on Provo City Boards Provo Will Recognize Volunteer City Boards

By N. La Verl Christensen

"The first requisite of a good citizen," said Theodore Roosevelt, "is that he be able and willing to pull his weight."

This article is about more than 500 Provo citizens who have gone far beyond that "first requisite."

They are present and past members of Provo City "Citizen Boards" whose talents, energies and leadership have helped make this a better community.

Their names and the board on which they serve or have served will be on permanent display at city hall, following a public ceremony Wednesday at 7 p.m.

The mayor's office, which compiled the list from city records, says it may be incomplete in some cases. Indeed, we note the omission of several members who served on boards in the "earlier years."

Our intent here is to cite a few specific accomplishments indicative of the over-all contribution of Provo's citizen boards.

Today there are many such boards. A half century ago there were very few. One of the best-known today is the Freedom Festival Board. What a great job its members do in staging the Fourth of July celebration!

An older group whose record of service reaches back into the thirties is the Metropolitan Water Board.

Organized to administer Provo City's water rights in Deer Creek Reservoir, it has gone beyond the call of duty in looking out for Provo's water interests.

For example, back in the early forties John O. Beesley and K. E.

(Bob) Bullock of the board approached Mayor Maurice Harding and urged the city to buy the Donnan property and water rights at Upper Falls in Provo Canyon.

With city approval, they and the board spearheaded negotiations and obtained financial help from the State Road Commission and Rio Grande Railroad in the acquisition which (1) expanded Provo's water holdings; (2) gave the city a small canyon park, and (3) improved transportation rights-of-way.

LeRoy J. Olsen, who served on the Metropolitan Water Board 1942 to 1977, recalls the dedica-

tion of the citizens group. He mentions especially Beesley's diligence in safeguarding water rights important to the city.

The Board of Adjustment and Planning Board were among early citizen units which have given long-time valuable service.

Harding remembers that it was with the support and urging of Fred L. Markham and other far-sighted citizens that the Planning Board was established.

George Smeath was the first planning director. The program has been instrumental in providing orderly growth patterns.

The Library Board, currently

involved in the drive for a new library facility, dates back a long time. The published list of those who have served should be augmented with such names as Clayton Jenkins, J. C. Moffitt, T. Earl Pardoe, Margaret Smith and Sherman W. Wing.

What Provo "old-timer" could forget the great contribution of J. Hamilton Calder, Vasco Tanner, Clarence Harmon and other early Power Board members in helping Mayor Mark Anderson get the municipal power program in full swing?

Former Mayor Verl G. Dixon has only praise for the citizen

boards. Prominent among those he mentioned is the Senior Citizens Council on Aging whose many-faceted program includes activities at the Eldred Center.

Russell D. Grange, another former mayor, considers the Neighborhood Committees especially vital in the citizen support. The committees involve themselves in such projects and issues as beautification, street and sidewalk improvements, safety, covering of ditches and canals, etc.

During Grange's administration, the city commissioners stimulated citizen interests by sometimes holding their meetings at neighborhood locations.

Mayor Ferguson Says Citizen's Boards Help Provo Government Work Efficiently

By NANCY BRINGHURST
Herald Staff Writer

Provo City couldn't possibly be run as efficiently as it is, or be such a nice place to live, if its citizens didn't get actively involved in their city's government, said Mayor James E. Ferguson.

Without those people who volunteer their time and talent serving on a citizen board, Provo City would find itself spending a considerable amount of money on consultants and other experts, he said.

"Citizen boards save the community a lot of money," said

Ferguson. "But that's not all we get from them. We get their expertise and involvement. We get their credibility and hear from the citizenry about their problems and concerns."

Provo residents may serve on one of the various citizen boards, which include:

- Airport Board.
- Board of Adjustment.
- Building Inspection Board of Appeals.
- Civil Service Commission.
- Council/Mayor Salary Committee.
- Cultural Affairs Board.
- Freedom Festival Board.

- Housing Authority.
- Library Board.
- Media Review Commission.
- Metropolitan Water Board.
- Neighborhood Advisory Board.
- Parking District Committee.
- Parks and Recreation Board.
- Planning Commission.

- Power Board.
- Provo Foundation.
- Redevelopment Agency.
- Senior Citizen's Council on Aging.

- Site Plan Review Committee.
- Timpanogos Transit Authority.
- Urban Forestry and Beautification Board.

To serve on any of the committees, all a Provo City resident has to do is let their desire to serve be known, said Ferguson.

"We're always looking for people to serve," he said. "I'm not going to sit here and say, look, here's your automatic berth and you've got it forever. We want a broader, more available group to choose from."

When he recommends someone to a citizen's board, Ferguson said he tries to include people who represent all sectors of the community.

In honor of Provo's 136th birthday, the city will unveil a permanent recognition Wednesday to honor those citizens who have served, or are serving, as volunteer members of a citizen's board.

Entitled, "In Community Service," the permanent recognition will be featured in a public ceremony at 7 p.m. in the city center, 359 W. Center Street.

A short reception will follow the unveiling ceremony. The public is invited to both events.

Mayor James E. Ferguson said the city has been working on the project for some time.

"It was brought to mind during the last two years of flooding, how important the volunteer efforts can be," he said. "We realize there are literally hundreds of volunteers, who, on a year round basis, give hundreds of hours of service to the city."

"Our city would not be the beautiful city it is today, if it were not for the citizens. We are pleased we will now have a permanent tribute for those who have given, and for those who continue to give service."

Wednesday's ceremony will be the culmination of over two years of preparation and research by city officials.